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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REPORT - LANDSLIDE VICTORY FOR
OBAMA IN INDIA

1. Begin summary: The India media gave unprecedented attention to the U.S. elections this year. Only India's own national elections aftermath could have surpassed Senator Barack Obama's election victory in sheer volume of coverage. In reporting and commentary, there was widespread admiration for America's political process and extraordinary enthusiasm for the President-elect. This 5000 year old civilization approvingly acknowledged that the world's oldest democracy was finally "coming of age" on matters involving race. Although some expressed concerns about the President-elect's views on non-proliferation issues, Kashmir and business outsourcing, media opinion reflected India's widespread jubilation at Senator Obama's victory. End Summary.

-- OFFICIAL INDIA WELCOMES PRESIDENT-ELECT BARACK OBAMA

2. The Indian government, politicians, intellectuals, the business community and the people of India welcomed Barack Obama's election. President Pratibha Patil said the people of India see his election as a historic mandate of the people of the US. PM Manmohan Singh hailed Obama's "extraordinary" journey.

3. Congress Party chairwoman Sonia Gandhi welcomed the U.S. result, while the party expressed confidence that Indo-US ties would grow stronger under Obama's leadership. The Opposition BJP party said "we look forward to an illustrious tenure and hope that he will fulfill his election promise of a warm relation with India."

-- MEDIA SALUTES AMERICA'S DIVERSITY

¶4. The Indian media approvingly viewed Obama's election as a watershed event in race relations that enhances America's moral authority. "By handing a landslide victory to its first ever African-American president, America already is a different country," said India's newspaper of record, THE TIMES OF INDIA. "America has come close to realizing King's dream. Obama's victory reflects America's diversity as much as it acknowledges his ability to appeal to voters across race, class and age," the paper said.

¶5. Effusive in its praise for American society, the mass-circulating DAINIK JAGRAN Hindi daily said: "Obama's becoming President is incredible, indicative of a sea change in the U.S. society.... It is noteworthy that he not just represented blacks, but the mainstream of the U.S. society." India's politicians should learn from him, the paper said.

¶6. ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA Bengali daily, eastern India's leading voice, said: "Only true democratic values can place an individual above all societal identity. America has set a historic example in cultivating this value." The leading LOKMAT Marathi language daily said: "It is a sign of a mature, clear and rich American democracy."

¶7. The U.S. election result dominated TV news on all

NEW DELHI 00002860 002 OF 003

channels throughout the day, with regular hyperbolic comments reflecting awe and admiration for the outcome. On India's NDTV 24X7 news channel, the country's most respected television anchor Prannoy Roy, said: "America has come of age. Obama's election speaks a lot for the American society." The channel's celebrity anchor Barkha Dutt, reporting live from Chicago, enthused: "America has shown it is a hybrid, multi-ethnic country." Rajdeep Sardesai, editor of the popular English television channel CNN-IBN, said: "Like everything else, this could happen only in America. Once again, America shows the way!"

-- MEDIA HOPES FOR A LESS CONFRONTATIST AMERICA

¶8. Some commentators saw in Obama's victory a rejection of President Bush's policies. This view was best typified by THE HINDU, South India's leading left-of-center English daily. The paper said: "It is a measure of the enormous damage George W. Bush has wrought on the image and stature of the United States of America that President-elect Barack Obama reserved a small part of his victory speech to deliver a message to the rest of the world. To all those watching tonight from beyond our shores, he said, a new dawn of American leadership was at hand."

¶9. Echoing similar sentiments, the pro-BJP PIONEER English daily said Obama will have to restore the world's faith in America. "Obama's call for drastic change in American policy at home and abroad will echo around the world, raising hopes that the US will stop playing the international bully and engage in genuine multilateralism," the paper said.

¶10. "It is weariness with the results of the foreign policy of the Bush administration that has rendered Obama a hopeful prospect for the world. The Bush era has seen the lowering of the prestige and image of the US abroad in its bellicose and unilateral pursuit of the war on terror," editorialized the leading ECONOMIC TIMES business daily.

¶11. Obama's win signifies a negative vote against the

policies of Republicans, said EENADU Telugu daily. In a harsher vein, Urdu daily HINDUSTAN EXPRESS said: "The victory of Obama is in fact a shameless defeat for arrogant America, symbolized by people like George W. Bush and John McCain." This was a common view in the pro-Islamic Urdu press.

-- WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR INDIA?

¶12. After the jubilation, the Indian media moved directly to the point. THE HINDU reported that Democratic reconquest of the White House has filled India's strategic establishment with a certain sense of foreboding. Some fear the "re-hyphenation" of India and Pakistan in American foreign policy and renewed activism on the question of Kashmir. Others worry about protectionism and curbs on outsourcing. The third set of concerns revolves

NEW DELHI 00002860 003 OF 003

around arms control issues, the paper said.

¶13. India should react cautiously on Obama's approach toward Kashmir, warned South India's leading Kannada newspaper PRAJAVANI. The EENADU Telegu daily said: "Obama has already hinted about a possible peacemaker role for the U.S. in Kashmir. India should be ever-vigilant while establishing relations with this new leader of the United States."

-- "NO MEDIATION ON KASHMIR"

¶14. Appearing on NDTV, India's former foreign secretary and the PM's special envoy Shyam Saran expressed admiration for Senator Obama and reflected on India's principled discussions with him regarding the bilateral relationship and the recently-concluded civil nuclear agreement. Regarding anxieties that a Democrat might seek to move aggressively to resolve regional issues, he said: "We need to convey to the U.S. Administration that it is a different India - it is not a state-client relationship." On the Kashmir issue, Saran noted: "We should politely convey we do not need a mediator. Obama has been very forthright on Pakistan"

-- IN DEFENSE OF OUTSOURCING

¶15. Appearing on the same show, top industrialist Anand Mahindra brushed aside fears that Senator Obama's job protection concerns would adversely affect business outsourcing to India, saying, "It was more an election statement." Mahindra said, "We should tell the U.S. that we help you stay more competitive. Without us you wouldn't be so competitive."

¶16. Brushing aside the concern, Indian Finance Minister P. Chidambaram told the media that Senator Obama's comments on outsourcing of services to India should not overly bother New Delhi. "Once Obama is in office, he will realize that it is an interconnected world and countries have to work together," he was widely quoted as saying.

¶17. COMMENT: Judging by the number of Indians rooting for him at a packed election event at the American Center in New Delhi Wednesday, it would be no exaggeration to say that Senator Obama's margin of victory would have been even larger in India than it was in the United States. Concerns on Kashmir, non-proliferation and trade aside, the massive and highly favorable media coverage shows that India not only sees Barack Obama's victory as a signal of America at its best, but also a recognition that its own future is more closely entwined with the U.S. than ever before.

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